

Date: April 5, 2021

From: Judy Newman, Early Childhood CARES- former Director and Senior Advisor

Re: Opposition to SB 596

SB 596 would have a negative impact on Oregon's Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) programs because it would prohibit this state run program from requiring the administration of the assessment it currently requires for all children enrolled in EI/ECSE programs. The assessment is the Assessment Evaluation and Programming System (AEPS) which is a commercially purchased assessment. The AEPS is a formative and developmentally based assessment tool that provides invaluable information to educators for targeting appropriate goals for individual children and tracking each child's progress towards meeting their goals at regular intervals. This gives timely information to teachers and service providers that enable them to make adjustments as soon as possible to keep a child on track to achieving their goals. And it provides information to parents about the progress their child is making. By using the same tool statewide for all EI/ECSE programs ODE is able to aggregate this data in a way that it can also be used to do the mandatory reporting to the federal government on specific outcome measures. Eliminating this would necessitate the use of other, less useful assessments to meet the federal reporting requirements.

The assessments used by other programs in early learning such as Preschool Promise, Oregon Prekindergarten, and Healthy Families Oregon are also developmentally appropriate and assist providers in developing high quality early learning experiences and environments and they support early learning providers for planning, tracking progress, communicating with parents. The early learning workforce has varying levels of formal training and knowledge base in typical development and appropriate activities and instruction and these assessment tools can support staff in their learning and teaching.

We know there is widespread criticism of the Kindergarten Assessment and there is much room for improvement, but the way the bill is written eliminates the option for the state to ever require an assessment to be completed on children entering kindergarten. If done well, a statewide assessment would provide invaluable information to the developing early learning system and help identify where we need to advocate for greater quality and equality under the law. We propose that Oregon makes improvements to the kindergarten assessment with involvement from early childhood and kindergarten educators, community-based organizations, civil and disability rights groups, and those with knowledge of developmentally appropriate assessment tools.

I oppose the passage of SB 596. Thank you for your time and consideration.